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AUTHOR	Barth, Patte
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ABSTRACT

In 1993 the Council for Basic Education assisted in the drafting of academic standards for the students of the Chicago (Illinois) Public Schools. The results of this project, the Chicago Learning Outcomes, are now the official basis for designing new curricula, citywide assessments, and professional development throughout the district. The Chicago effort was distinguished from other standard-setting movements in its open collaboration between the central office and the teachers' union and its reliance on the input of the local education councils. Discipline-based national standards provided the starting point for the Chicago standards, but the responsibility for drafting was in the hands of practicing classroom teachers. The drafting process involved 30 practicing teachers in teams corresponding to 6 subject areas. In spite of the complications of teacher contract negotiation, the standards were eventually announced in February 1994. The reality of transforming over 500 schools to meet the new standards is the ongoing effort of the Chicago schools. Sample learning outcomes standards are presented for social sciences and biological and physical sciences for grades 4, 8, and 11. (SLD)

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PERSPECTIVE
Council for Basic Education

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FROM CRISIS TO CONSENSUS

Setting Standards in Chicago

by Patte Barth

As we debate standards nationally, the question for states and districts remains: How do you reconcile national standards with local needs and values? The Chicago standards project set out to provide an answer.

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Vol. 7, No. 1 Fall 1994

PERSPECTIVE

Council for Basic Education

INTRODUCTION

In 1993, the Council for Basic Education assisted the drafting of academic standards for the students of Chicago. The project was led by a unique collaboration of the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union—parties more accustomed to seeing each other on the opposite sides of the bargaining table. The results of this project—the Chicago Learning Outcomes—are now the official basis for designing new curriculum, citywide assessments, and professional development throughout the district.

The Chicago project was a model for moving from national goals to local standards. Based on its success, CBE has helped communities to establish standards in Jackson, Mississippi and Milwaukee, Wisconsin and expects to assist other communities in similar efforts.

The Joyce Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supported the Chicago Standards Project and the publication of this *Perspective*. We are grateful for their support.

We also wish to remember the passing of two individuals who brought vision and dedication to this project. Jacqueline B. Vaughn, president of the Chicago Teachers Union, died last January. John Kotsakis, assistant to the president for educational issues, CTU, passed away unexpectedly in September. We dedicate this issue of *Perspective* to them in order to remember their commitment and belief in the children of Chicago.

Christopher T. Cross
President
Council for Basic Education

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FROM CRISIS TO CONSENSUS

Setting Standards in Chicago

by Patte Barth

In the summer of 1993, the Chicago schools were a public relations disaster. The radical restructuring imposed by the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 had not yet shaken a decades-old legacy that defined administrative waste and teacher union militancy. The system appeared to be clueless about how to meet the educational needs of its urban children, some of whom, The Chicago Tribune had revealed, arrived at school never having seen a book and not even knowing their own last names. Equally troubling, Chicago schools still bore the stigma of having once been tagged "the nation's worst" by a United States Secretary of Education. Now faced with a potential $415 million budget deficit, the Board of Education and the teachers' union were mobilizing for yet another round of acrimonious contract negotiations. The Illinois government in Springfield was stonewalling on a financial bail-out. And the Chicago superintendency was vacant—again. The public and press were not amused.

But even as school-politics-as-usual commanded center stage, the main players were elsewhere engaged in conversation unnoticed by the otherwise scrutinizing media. The talk had nothing to do with job protections, downsizing, or pension funds. It didn't rail at the legislature in Springfield. There were no threats of walk-outs, no accusations of financial skulduggery. This conversation was focused on raising the academic expectations of Chicago students to world-class levels as called for in the National Education Goals. Even more remarkable, it was taking place cooperatively between central office and union leadership. A few of us at the Council for Basic Education also had a part.

The story of this unusual partnership actually began several months earlier and was facilitated with the friendly intervention of two local philanthropies, the Joyce Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In 1992, the Chicago Board of Education had formally adopted a strategic plan drafted by a Task Force including teachers, principals, parents, community members, and union representatives. The plan was designed to fulfill both the primary purpose of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act—increasing student achievement—and the mandate from

the Illinois Public School Recognition System calling for the development of learning outcomes. To effect the plan, the administration of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) approached the foundations early in 1993 to support the drafting of *learning outcomes* for all Chicago students that would provide the framework for new curriculum and assessment citywide.

Independent of CPS's effort, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) was pursuing national *standards* to guide instruction and assessment in its twenty-six "Quest" schools. The Quest Center, according to CTU literature, was established "to help teaching professionals effect revolutionary change in the education of Chicago's children." A little reported but active arm of CTU, the Quest Center and its participating schools serve as laboratories for innovative teaching ideas and methods.

Even as school-politics-as-usual commanded center stage, the main players were talking about raising the academic expectations of Chicago students to world-class levels.

Believing that earlier discussions with the Board of Education about possible collaboration had stalled, the CTU Quest Center submitted its own proposal to the same two foundations requesting support over three years to explore the connections among academic standards, teaching practice, and increased student learning. The proposed basis for this project would be the synthesis of standard compiled by the Council for Basic Education (CBE) in 1991, which offered national credibility.

The Joyce and MacArthur foundations saw an obvious opportunity for cooperation between the mutually wary union and central office. They also saw a chance to make Chicago a national model for standards setting. All parties agreed that the culminating piece of this collaboration would be provided by CBE, which would bring its national perspective to the task. Symbolically combining the CPS's *learning outcomes* and the CTU's *standards*, the *Chicago Learning Outcome Standards Project* was officially launched in June 1993.

On the front pages, the teachers' current contract was scheduled to expire on August 31. The Board of Education was pleading broke.

National Goals to Local Standards

The Chicago Project is part of an ongoing national movement to publicly describe high academic expectations for all American students. The National Education Goals, drafted and adopted by the governors of the fifty states and territories in 1990, signaled a strategic shift in the ways states approached educational improvement. Whereas the previous decade had focused reform efforts on requiring schools to do more of what they were already doing—and yielding little gain for all the trouble—the governors agreed that a new definition of the ends of public education was needed to prepare their students for the future demands of the workplace and citizenship. The governors clearly did not want federal mandates. However, they did want a national gauge for defining and measuring results so that Iowa, for example, would know that the expectations for its students were as rigorous as those for their peers both nationally and internationally. At the time, no such gauge existed.

The U.S. Department of Education waded into the reform current by funding projects to establish national *voluntary* content standards in the basic subjects based on the mathematics model established earlier by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). Unlike curriculum or curriculum frameworks, the national standards were to be short statements of the essential concepts and abilities expected of all students in each discipline. They would not specify the material to be taught or tasks to be performed; that is the function of curriculum, which is and would remain a local responsibility. Standards would, however, define the results the curriculum should achieve. For example, a reasonable science standard might be: *Students are able to understand the composition of matter*. Possible avenues to this knowledge are myriad and are found in both the life and physical sciences. How this concept is conveyed—in which course of study, using which resources, topics, textbooks, or kinds of instruction—would be the job of states, districts, and individual schools to decide.

How a standard is conveyed would be the job of states, districts, and individual schools to decide.

The standards would be truly *national*; they carried no *federal* authority. Although the subject professionals would lead these projects, the standards would be written by broad-based consensus among interested members of the public as well as within the profession itself. The standards projects are an important element in efforts to achieve the national education goals, even though the last of the standards projects is not scheduled to be completed until sometime in 1996.

CBE made its own contribution to the standards discussion early in 1991 with the release of "Standards: A Vision For Learning"—a synthesis of the best current thinking about student expectations culled from professional documents, state curriculum frameworks, and the NCTM standards. The approximately 200 "Standards," divided by six basic subjects and at grade levels 4, 8, and 12, were printed on a poster-sized chart to provide an across-the-board overview. "Standards" was intended as a talking document with which we hoped to inform the public as well as engage them in deciding what standards would be meaningful for their communities. CBE distributed 85,000 copies of the "Standards" chart, including 2,500 to the Chicago Teachers Union at the request of the Quest Center.

While the standards debate was being undertaken nationally, states and local districts were moving ahead with reform efforts of their own. Chicago was one of these. The city was in the midst of massive restructuring imposed by the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988, which had as its major feature the decentralization of school governance to the building level through local school councils (LSCs). Illinois was also developing a statewide school accountability system tied, in part, to student achievement of the state "learning goals."

All was not well nationally, however. A few other states that had moved to define new standards and assessments were meeting with mixed results. Virginia and Pennsylvania, two famous examples, had proceeded to conduct their standards-setting process within state department of education walls. That both states were surprised by the public outcry that greeted the documents' release is now well known: Pennsylvania was forced into significant modifications and Virginia abandoned its plan altogether.

Quite possibly the most fatal miscalculation of other standards setters was the decision to write standards in secret.

The benefit of hindsight shows that both efforts had many flaws. With nearly 700 outcomes in the first draft, the Pennsylvania document was far too voluminous. Both states conducted a closed drafting process, excluding not only the public but even classroom teachers. Both articulated outcomes that were arguably non-academic, calling for the development of such ambiguous qualities as "self-worth." Most significantly, both states showed how profoundly out of touch their departments of education were with their communities.

In a converse way, Virginia and Pennsylvania performed a service to results-based reform by demonstrating what not to do. The question for other states and districts remained, however: How do you reconcile national standards with local needs and values? The Chicago standards project set out to provide an answer.

Chicago Learning Outcome Standards

The Chicago project was distinguished from those troubled efforts at the outset. To begin with, the partnership of central office and union characterized the commitment to cooperation on which this project's success would ultimately depend. Quite possibly the most fatal miscalculation of other standards setters was the decision to write standards in secret. In Chicago, the overriding assumption was that everyone who shares an interest in the schooling of the next generation has something to contribute to defining what that schooling should mean. This assumption was only partly philosophical. School governance, decentralized by the 1988 Reform Act, demanded that curricular decisions, among others, be made at the school level by the local school councils—the elected eleven-member bodies which include teachers, parents, and community members. To exclude teachers and the public from the decision making about standards was simply bad politics.

The project was directed by an executive committee which included an equal number of central office and union representatives and which was co-chaired by Adrienne Bailey, deputy superintendent of the office of instructional services for CPS, and John Kotsakis, assistant to the president for educational issues, CTU. CBE staff, including this writer, sat on the committee as advisers.

The first task of the executive committee was the establishment of these ground rules, which were later proven to be essential:

1. *The learning outcome standards would be informed by national standards and drafted by Chicago teachers.* This would assure the best of both worlds: a national gauge of content and rigor tailored to reflect the unique character of the community. The CBE "Standards" chart was one resource; also brought to the table were the emerging drafts from the national standards projects, the NCTM standards, independent efforts such as Project 2061 in science, and exemplary frameworks from other states. Nothing in these documents was a given, however. All of the material would be evaluated for its importance to Chicago. The only requirement was that the expectations for Chicago students be as high as, or higher than, those for their national counterparts.

In addition, using discipline-based national standards as a jumping off point kept the Chicago project's focus on academic expectations, thereby avoiding the pitfall of writing non-measurable and ultimately unpopular outcomes which venture too far into attitudinal waters.

2. *Teams of teachers would write the draft; their colleagues and the public would decide its final content.* The responsibility for the principal drafting would be in the hands of practicing classroom teachers based on the belief that they best understand the day-to-day needs and interests of Chicago students. Curriculum specialists from the central office were available as advisers, but were not part of the drafting teams. It was also established that the final decisions would be made with the involvement of the public, for its support—and patience—would be needed during the longer, messier job of implementation. Moreover, opening the process to public participation before

> *The responsibility for the drafting would be in the hands of practicing classroom teachers, because they best understand the needs and interests of Chicago students.*

final decisions are made avoids the unhappy confrontations encountered elsewhere. Public participation would be encouraged through widespread distribution and outreach throughout the Chicago community. In addition, the draft itself would be written in clear, concise, and easily understandable language, and printed in a visually appealing chart (not unlike the CBE chart) in order to make the learning outcome standards accessible to lay readers.

3. *Setting standards was only the first step towards transforming teaching and learning.* Schools have witnessed the rise and swift demise of many reform initiatives. Little wonder that teachers have become cynical about being asked yet again to participate in a great reform effort only to see it shrivel for lack of upkeep. The Chicago participants understood that the learning outcome standards, once adopted, would become the framework for new curriculum, new assessments, and new methods for instruction. Even more important, they had the commitment of the Board of Education, the CPS offices, and CTU to see that teachers had the professional development support and resources to sustain the transition.

4. The executive committee also established principles to guide the drafting of learning outcome standards in every subject. It was asserted, foremost, that the standards would be high; that they would demand the capacity to think critically, reason, and communicate; and that all students would be expected to reach them. The standards would further reveal a world of many cultures and many peoples.

Tailoring national standards to local needs inevitably raises some housekeeping issues as well. Such matters as deciding which subjects are to be examined, for example, vary from one region to the next. The executive committee easily decided to be consistent with the six subject areas defined by the state of Illinois: Biological and Physical Sciences, Fine Arts, Language Arts, Mathematics, Physical Development and Health, and Social Sciences. Illinois's "state goals for learning" by subject would be presented on the chart as the statutory requirement of public education. (Significantly, as the learning outcome standards later evolved, the Chicago expectations would exceed the state goals.)

Deciding which benchmark levels would be defined, however, led to a committee debate which fell along CPS/CTU lines. "Benchmarks are the points at which measurements would be taken to monitor student progress. The national standards projects follow the benchmark levels used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): grades 4, 8, and 12. These points also coincide nicely with different cognitive stages: at grade 4, children are beginning to move from learning how to read to using reading as a means for learning; eighth-graders are beginning to open their minds to abstraction; and grade 12 represents the exit point of public school. Arguments can be made for different representations, particularly with younger children, and some of these issues were raised. A relatively easy compromise was reached to establish benchmarks at grades 4 and 8. The real contention dealt with the upper secondary benchmark: CPS staff argued for grade 11 in order to give struggling students one more year to improve their performance; the union, on the other hand, was pushing for grade 12 exit standards, precisely in order to place more accountability on students', as well their own, shoulders.

Benchmark levels were eventually decided: grades 4, 8, and 11. It was just a minor skirmish.

The Drafting Process

Ruth Mitchell, CBE's then-associate director, and I arrived in Chicago in mid-July 1993 to kickstart the drafting of the learning outcomes standards. That week, Education Week reported that, despite a state mandate to balance their budget, the Chicago schools were projecting a $415 million deficit for the 1993-94 academic year. The chance of the state legislature producing emergency funds was said to be unlikely. The same Ed Week reported modest indications that LSC-governance in Chicago was leading to "enhanced local democratic participation," according to the findings of the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Moreover, it appeared that "virtually all" of the schools were focusing their school plans on improving academic improvement.

(continued on page 10)

Sample Chicago Learning Outcomes

State Goals for Learning	Grade 4
from **Biological & Physical Sciences**	*from* **Biological & Physical Sciences**
Students will be able to:	
• understand the concepts and basic vocabulary of biological, physical, and environmental sciences and their application to life and work in contemporary technological society. • understand the social and environmental implications and limitations of technological development. • apply the principles of scientific research and their application in simple research projects. • employ the processes, techniques, methods, equipment, and available technology of science.	• Demonstrate that living and nonliving things are composed of different types of matter and have properties that may change. • Show relationship between balanced and unbalanced forces and motion. • Identify different energy forms and demonstrate the relationship between work and energy. • Describe the characteristics of the earth's spheres (geosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, exosphere, and biosphere). • Use observation, classification, and metric measure to answer questions; communicate the results in an unbiased fashion.
from **Social Sciences**	*from* **Social Sciences**
Students will be able to:	
• understand and analyze comparative political and economic systems, with an emphasis on the political and economic systems of the United States. • understand and analyze events, trends, personalities, and movements shaping the history of the world, the United States, and Illinois. • demonstrate a knowledge of the basic concepts of the social sciences and how these help to interpret human behavior. • demonstrate knowledge of world geography with emphasis on that of the United States. • apply the skills and knowledge gained in the social sciences to decision-making in life situations.	• Demonstrate a basic understanding of the structure and function of local, state, and federal governments. • Examine the similarities and differences of world communities. • Exhibit an understanding of the sequential nature of events in local and national history. • Explore the influence of individuals and groups, differing by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture, and their impact on United States society. • Use maps, globes, and other geographic tools and technology to identify the major physical and cultural features of the earth. • Determine how current events impact our daily lives. • Recognize that individual and group behavior entails responsibilities as well as rights.

Grade 8

from Biological & Physical Sciences

- Demonstrate the functions and interrelationships of human body systems.
- Analyze patterns of change in biological, physical, chemical, and geological systems.
- Relate the Periodic Table of Elements to atomic structure
- Evaluate the implications of industrial technology and biotechnology in a variety of environmental and human contexts.
- Formulate hypotheses, plan experiments, and present data in a variety of formats, including graphing.
- Use appropriate technology, such as computers, microscopes, calculators, and models.

from Social Sciences

- Analyze primary source documents, laws, customs, and traditions that gave rise to the development of our democratic form of government.
- Exhibit an understanding of the chronology and significance of the major historical, political, social, and economic events contributing to the development and growth of the United States.
- Recognize the various factors that influence human development and behavior.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how climate and topography affect the way people live.
- Analyze and explain the influence of mass communication and technology on society's values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Grade 11

from Biological & Physical Sciences

- Demonstrate an understanding of the cellular structure and molecular activity occurring in organisms.
- Analyze changes in atoms and molecules in physical, chemical, and nuclear contexts.
- Evaluate limitations in amount and use of energy and other natural resources and the importance of conservation and recycling.
- Recognize discordant observations, state problems, generate and carry our appropriate lines of inquiry, and arrange information in meaningful ways.
- Analyze scientific problems and employ mathematical operations to their solutions when appropriate.

from Social Sciences

- Use the tools of historical research, including primary documents, written and oral records, and technology.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the interdependence and interrelatedness of the world community economically, politically, and culturally.
- Exhibit an understanding of how historical events influence the development of the political, economic, and cultural institutions of the United States and the world.
- Understand how the availability and use of resources affect the foreign policy of nations.
- Analyze global patterns of the earth's physical features, political divisions, economic ties, and cultural diffusion, using geographical data.
- Examine how contemporary issues influence public policy.

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On the negative side, the Consortium estimated that 25-36% of the LSC's were pursuing "unfocused" initiatives, referring to these as "Christmas-tree schools."

The mixed news from the school district was not unknown to the teachers who came to be part of this project. The possibility that schools would not open in September, or that contract negotiations would break down, would stalk the proceedings over the next four weeks like a wolf in the garden. At the same time, these were teachers who, in spite of their cynicism, rose to the opportunity to bring badly-needed coherence to the efforts of 540 separate LSCs—to focus these "Christmas-tree schools" on common academic expectations—and to raise the sights for urban students for whom too little has too often been the expectation.

The possibility that schools would not open in September, or that contract negotiations would break down, stalked the proceedings like a wolf in the garden.

Thirty practicing classroom teachers were convened in teams corresponding to the six subject areas. Maintaining the spirit of equal partners, the working sessions were divided evenly between CTU headquarters and the CPS Pershing Road offices. In addition, CPS and CTU each selected an equal number of participants. As a curious aside, my colleague and I were often told in whispers about certain teachers who were "obviously" either central office or union designees. In truth, neither of us, even now, could identify a "CPS" from a "CTU" teacher, such was the shared level of commitment.

We helped the teachers with instructions on writing the standards statements, based on CBE's methods of culling standards from lengthy professional documents. They were to focus on what Ruth Mitchell likes to call the *big ideas* of their disciplines—those few concepts that teachers would go to the mat and fight for in order to keep them in their teaching. The statements were to be *assessable*. For example, "analyzing literary works" can be demonstrated and measured, whereas "enjoying literary works" cannot—no matter how desirable students' pleasure might be as an objective. As the drafting process evolved, we also came to believe that the statements should accommodate multiple means of assessment. Thus, "knowing the events leading to the American Revolution" asks only that the students know them, yes or no; "discussing" these events, however, "explaining," or "analyzing" them, demands far more critical thought from students, which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.

We also gave the teachers some guidance on distinguishing between standards statements and curricular tasks: for example, "debating the pros and cons of various issues" is a standard by virtue of expressing an essential concept to be learned; "debating the environmental impact of disposable diapers" is a possible curricular task leading to attainment of the standard. The distinction, however, is not always so clear and this was a theme that would be constantly revisited throughout the process.

Strict parameters for the standards were given as follows: each subject would have no more than ten standards for each benchmark level; each standard statement was to have no more than twenty-five words. These parameters were entirely arbitrary. We never actually counted words or items. But they proved to be valuable means to direct everyone's thinking to the "big ideas." When combined with an extremely tight deadline to complete the standards, these restrictions forced closure on debates that would otherwise continue indefinitely.

Building consensus is hard work—even in small groups such as these. Decisions are made more difficult by limiting the number of ideas that will survive the process; it's far easier to compromise through inclusion rather than exclusion. The high-powered teachers we were working with each brought to the table strong convictions about what students should be expected to know, which sometimes conflicted with those of

Teachers were asked to focus on the "big ideas" of their disciplines—those few concepts they would go to the mat and fight for.

their equally high-powered colleagues. Consequently, disagreement within groups was common and more than a few feathers were ruffled. But the debates, though sometimes loud, were almost always constructive.

The national documents used for reference were helpful guides, but were not accepted on face value. The teachers evaluated this information for its compatibility with what they wanted for their students. Significantly, the effect was a ratcheting up of expectations. This was most apparent in the mathematics and science teams, both of which defined standards for all Chicago students that exceeded the Illinois state goals. We asked these teams if the standards they articulated could be achieved within the state requirements for time spent in these subjects. Their answer: No, it was not possible. However, they believed that this background was necessary and could be achieved. Moreover, they told us that they were willing to be held accountable to see that all of their students met them.

The first half of this four-week process had been devoted to drafting standards by subject area. During the final weeks, team leaders from each subject were convened to consider cross-disciplinary connections, forging links from their own subject standards to other subjects where the intersections seem logical and natural. Following the model of the CBE chart, the links were identified by icons coded to the six subjects to highlight the areas of connection on the final draft document. They also examined the standards as a whole document, identifying areas of overlap or possible omissions, and making appropriate adjustments.

Although the objective of this four-week session had been to produce a draft of learning outcome standards, at its conclusion we saw that the process had had another profound benefit for the participants. Thinking about what is essential for their students to know and do, arguing about it with their colleagues, coming as a group to an agreement that will affect all of them had been a powerful mechanism for professional development. It not only renewed their connection to their subjects, it rekindled their commitment to Chicago students—a dedication that didn't waver even as the likelihood that school would not open in September loomed more heavily each day. Interestingly, every expression we made of our admiration for their perseverance was greeted with a shrug of the shoulders and the statement: "In Chicago, that is just the way it is."

By mid-August, the teachers had completed their work and the draft was being prepared to go public. Contract negotiations were at a standstill.

Ready for the Review

The Board of Education shut down on September 1. The Illinois legislature passed an emergency resolution allowing the board to return to their offices the next day and remain open through September 13 without a budget plan. Nonetheless, school opening was delayed by one week, and the teachers were now without a contract. As if to rub salt in gaping wounds, William Bennett, the former U.S. Secretary of Education, breezed into town long enough to proclaim Chicago schools "probably still the worst" and "truly rotten."

From August 1 into October, we proceeded with the preparation of the Chicago draft standards despite never knowing if we would be able to reach key people or if they had again been sent home. Two CPS members of the project's executive committee took early retirements. One bright spot out of all the summer chaos had been the naming of Argie K. Johnson to fill the vacant superintendency. In her early statements, Ms. Johnson showed her commitment to high standards. Coupled with the continuing support of CTU president Jacqueline B. Vaughn, the Chicago learning outcome standards remained a high priority.

With the draft still in being edited, the CTU Quest Center was moving towards developing curricular prototypes connected to the standards from the summer session. Teams from eleven Quest schools had been brought together on August 16 and 17 for a workshop led by Ruth Mitchell, which showed how to analyze standards for commonalities from which teachers can develop real-world, academically rigorous, and motivating curriculum. The workshop opened a year-long sub-project in which the Quest Center would provide $10,000 to each team to produce standards-driven curriculum prototypes for eventual publication.

At last, in the first week of November, the first copies of the Chicago Learning Outcomes Standards chart—clearly marked "DRAFT"—were released to the public. A Spanish-language edition followed on November 25. On the reverse side of the chart

Arguing with their colleagues about what it is essential for their students to know and do was a powerful mechanism for professional development.

was an expository text that described the purpose of the standards as the center of a comprehensive initiative to transform teaching and learning in Chicago schools. The text was introduced by a letter co-signed by Superintendent Argie K. Johnson and CTU President Jacqueline B. Vaughn. Included with the package was an evaluation form that asked reviewers to rate the learning outcomes for appropriateness, quality, and completeness, and to offer suggestions for implementation.

Until the last minute, it had been hoped that a high-profile public announcement of the chart would be made at a press conference co-conducted by Ms. Johnson and Ms. Vaughn. Unfortunately, the continuing contract and budget crises were still heaping bad publicity on the schools, at the time open only because of federal court ruling. It was feared that any staged event would backfire when seen through the lens of a skeptical media and public. After much consideration, the decision was made to approach outreach aggressively, but quietly, through the schools and district offices.

The outreach campaign was launched on several fronts. The project convened an advisory committee including representatives of LSCs, businesses, reform groups, and other civic leaders, for the purpose of reviewing and criticizing the chart. Three city-wide awareness sessions were held on November 4, 8, and 10 for principals, planning committee chairs, and LSC members. The awareness sessions attracted over 750 par-

ticipants. Additional review sessions were conducted for district superintendents, at the educational support committee meetings, and for the public at each of the eleven subdistricts. In addition, a major citywide teachers' conference was held on February 5, 1994 to review and discuss the learning outcomes as well as the first curriculum prototypes generated by the Quest schools.

The draft was also distributed nationally to leaders in education reform who were asked to comment. Among them, Ted Sizer of Brown University responded in a supportive letter to Deborah Walsh of the CTU Quest Center, writing:

> What a comprehensive piece! As I reviewed your work, I thought about the difficulty of bringing various constituencies together to focus on these things that really should guide students in their steps toward meaningful citizenship. By modeling collegiality in the drafting of this document, the Chicago Teachers Union, Quest, and the Chicago Public Schools demonstrate what it means to work in a society where consensus can benefit all of its citizens.

Mr. Sizer went on to caution that classrooms need to be structured in ways to make the standards attainable, stating that "standards must be linked with how teachers teach." He added that professional development will be crucial—something well known to the project. Nonetheless, he recognized that "clearly much work had gone into this document" and wished the project much success.

A total of 1081 response sheets was returned to the executive committee. Responses were overwhelmingly favorable, with a sizable majority of readers reporting that the outcomes "reflected what an educated person should know and be able to do"; "are high enough"; "cover major concepts"; and perhaps most significantly to the practitioners, "are useful to guide instruction." The most often requested item for implementation was professional development for teachers and parents.

By February 1994, most of machinations between Chicago and Springfield, and between CPS and CTU, had played themselves out—at least for the time. The budget was somewhat under control with the help of concessions from both the board and the union, and Chicago children had settled into the midway point of the school year. The city schools would not go without one more sad setback, however. Jacqueline Vaughn died following a battle with cancer.

The CPS-designated members of the standards project's executive committee had now experienced a 100% turnover with the departure of Adrienne Bailey. The new members picked up where their colleagues left off, however, helping the rest of the executive committee review the responses to the draft chart and prepare the final text. Finally, on February 23, 1994, a press conference was held jointly by the Board of

Education and CTU at which Superintendent Johnson and Tom Reece, the new CTU president, formally presented *The Chicago Framework for Transforming Teaching and Learning* to the Chicago board. The new name for the standards was strategic: the executive committee wanted to emphasize that the expectations codified on the chart represented just one aspect of revitalizing every Chicago classroom.

> ***By modeling collegiality in the drafting of this document, Chicago has demonstrated what it means to work in a society where consensus can benefit all of its citizens.***
>
> ***—Ted Sizer***

Also participating in the conference were then-CBE President A. Graham Down, Peter Martinez from the MacArthur Foundation, and Warren Chapman from the Joyce Foundation, who noted that Chicago's Framework may eventually serve as a national prototype for reforming education.

That afternoon, the Chicago Board of Education voted to adopt the chart as the basis for curriculum, assessment, and instruction in Chicago schools. The local TV news that evening had something good to report about the schools for a change. That completed the easy part.

Reality

As difficult as setting standards is, the reality of transforming over 500 schools to be able to meet them is infinitely more so. But that is precisely the job the CPS/CTU partnership has set out for itself. Rather than allow the enormous size of the task to overwhelm them, the Chicago project continues to push forward wherever and however it can.

Much of the project activity in implementation has been channeled through the Quest Center. At the February 5 meeting, the first of the curriculum prototypes were presented to a national panel of experts including Philip Daro of the New Standards Project, Warren Simmons of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Betty Edwards of the Kentucky Department of Education, and Ruth Mitchell. The prototypes were interdisciplinary units keyed directly to specific standards on the chart. One unit on West African Art asked as its driving question: "What does the artwork of West Africa tell us about the lives of people living there?" This eighth-grade unit integrates social studies, language

arts, and fine arts, and is designed to assess at least two standards. A unit for fourth-graders asks students to plan a trip around the United States and incorporates key concepts in social studies, language arts, and mathematics.

The panel's reaction to these initial prototypes was highly encouraging. Consequently, the Quest Center, with Joyce and MacArthur support, is continuing to assist more curricular development and is initiating methods for dissemination of the results. An important part of their efforts is in bringing teachers together to talk about practice and change.

On other fronts, efforts to design new performance assessments for the standards have been announced, stalled, and (or so the most recent word is) are getting back on track. Project members have reported disappointment at the sluggish pace assessment is taken. Even so, they take some encouragement from the official commitment of the Board of Education to establish citywide assessments based on the chart's standards.

The local TV news had something good to report about the schools for a change.

Although the standards setting was intensive work, at the end the participants could see the results of their labors in the form of a colorful chart on the walls of Chicago schools' offices. Transforming schools is a much longer, arduous process. Far from the sustained focused effort of summer, school change generally comes in fits and starts, here a breakthrough, there movement so subtle it's barely perceptible. The Chicago teachers carry the further burden of being expected to effect these changes while being squeezed from two sides. Decisions made in Springfield bear on the central office and fall like bricks on the classroom teacher; at the same time, more and more children with crushing needs enter that same teacher's door every day.

We can't kid ourselves into thinking that expecting high standards in itself will solve all the problems of Chicago's, or any city's students. But clearly stated standards—supported by the community, advanced through performance assessments, curriculum, and sufficient opportunity for professional development—can focus schools and teachers on what they are best equipped to offer these children—a window through knowledge into the world and the expectation that they will some day have an important part to play in it. The first major step towards this end has been taken in Chicago.

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For nearly forty years, the Council for Basic Education (CBE) has promoted a curriculum strong in the basic subjects—English, history, geography, government, mathematics, the sciences, foreign languages, and the arts—for all children in the nation's elementary schools. CBE has historically cast itself as an independent, critical voice for education reform. We complement this role by undertaking the design and administration of practical programs to foster better learning through better teaching.

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1319 F Street, N.W., Suite 900
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